



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
POLCY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2016
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor J Gillies
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor P MacKenzie (Convener)
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor K McLeod
Councillor J Williamson

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)
Mr J Lamond, Head of Council Resources
Mr D Proudfoot, Head of Development
Ms S Saunders, Head of Children and Adult Services
Ms F Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer
Ms A Thompson, Public Protection Team Manager
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement
Mr J Cunningham, Service Manager – Benefits
Mr K Christie, Service Manager – Revenues
Ms A Stewart, Rent Income Team Leader
Ms A McIntyre, Performance and Business Development Officer
Ms T Moncrieff, Welfare Development Officer
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer

Clerk:

Ms A Smith

Apologies:

Councillor D Berry

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 3 OCTOBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 3 October 2016 were approved.

Matters Arising – Councillor McLennan requested an update on the Trading Standards figures, queried at the last meeting. Douglas Proudfoot, Head of Development, advised that there were significant resource issues in this very small team due to a combination of sickness absence, maternity leave and a vacant position; how to move this forward was being actively considered. Regarding consumer activity he had queried the reason for the spike; there was no specific pattern, the nature and range of consumer complaints was unpredictable. The number of complaints regarding other agencies took issues beyond 14 days; he would check with colleagues in the Policy Team to see how this could be better articulated in the performance indicators.

2. PERFORMANCE REPORT, Q2 2016/17

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) regarding the performance of Council services during Q2 (July to September) 2016/17.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement, reported that briefings for Members on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be re-instated from February 2017 which would link in with the Q3 performance report to the March Committee. Gary Stewart, Policy Officer, then presented the report. He took Members through the report in detail, providing further information on KPIs for the various service areas listed, drawing particular attention to some specific indicators. A KPI update note was tabled.

In response to questions from Councillor McLeod about the contact centre, Mr Vestri referred to a previous report to Committee, which he would provide. Regarding fly tipping targets, Mr Vestri stated these had been proposed by officers and agreed by this Committee; he added that there was also a relevant previous report which he would provide.

Ashley McIntyre, Performance and Business Development Officer, responded to Councillor McLeod's questions on rent arrears. She advised that in quarter 1 the rent arrears figure had reduced, largely due to the rent free fortnight. There had however been a 20% increase in the 3 month period to the end of September. She reported that there were now 600 plus claimants receiving Universal Credit, supporting people through the transition to monthly budgeting was very resource intensive. The introduction of Universal Credit was having a direct impact on rent collection. Kenny Christie, Service Manager – Revenues, reported that March 2016 had seen the move to Universal Credit full digital service; he gave details of the lead in period and associated issues. He informed Members that rent payments that used to come direct to the Council in the form of Housing Benefit would now go direct to the claimant. Alison Stewart, Rent Income Team Leader, gave Members details regarding food bank referrals and also drew attention to the level of resource required by officers to guide tenants through the system.

Councillor McLennan, referring to the approaching budget process, remarked that officers should keep Members informed of any resource issues. With regard to the Universal Credit report on the work programme for the January Committee he indicated it would be helpful to get details of specific case studies and also, if possible, information from an external agency, a food bank, for example. Mr Christie advised that a report was currently being prepared for the Council Management Team; he confirmed that staffing resource was an issue. John Cunningham, Service Manager – Benefits, added that a major issue was the Council's Scottish Welfare Fund's expenditure; officers were trying to respond to this as best they

could, but there was an impact on resources. Monica Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, reiterated that the impact of Universal Credit on the workload of staff had been significant. She informed Members that the Council was exemplary in terms of the support being provided to the general public.

Councillor McLennan, referring to the homelessness KPIs, asked for a more detailed report providing further analysis to be brought forward. Mr Cunningham informed Members that a paper would be presented to the Social Security Committee at the Scottish Parliament tomorrow regarding the effect of the rollout of Universal Credit. This was having a direct effect on homelessness figures. Ms Patterson confirmed that a report would be brought forward as requested; the most appropriate meeting for this would be considered.

Mr Cunningham responded to questions from Councillor Goodfellow about people not yet on Universal Credit but affected by the benefit cap and the impact on rent arrears. He advised that in terms of scale, the benefit cap was smaller. Officers were working with these people; details were shared with the Homelessness Team and the Rent Income Team. The latest benefit cap was expected to involve 70 plus households in East Lothian. Of these it was expected that approximately 13 would have also been affected by the initial benefit cap in 2013.

Councillor Williamson queried the East Lothian Works KPIs. Mr Proudfoot stated there was a direct correlation regarding both indicators; he would discuss future target setting with colleagues in the Policy Team.

Responding to Councillor MacKenzie's questions, Mr Christie confirmed that a decision taken several years ago to increase staff numbers to address council house rent collections had proved cost effective following a period during which the team had been depleted. He stressed that it was a completely different situation now with Universal Credit. The team had always had an early intervention approach, visiting tenants in their homes, however since the introduction of Universal Credit, visits were being carried out to all claimants whether they had arrears or not; this was where the resource was required. In response to further questions, he confirmed that officers were aware of the pastoral element; at every stage there was a sense of responsibility and care.

Regarding questions from Councillor MacKenzie about delayed discharges figures, specifically the impact of measures detailed in the report to the last Committee, Sharon Saunders, Head of Children and Adult Services, confirmed that the efforts described were having an impact; she added that the most up to date delayed discharges figure was 29.

Mr Cunningham responded to Councillor McAllister's questions, outlining alternatives for tenants in relation to the benefit cap. In respect of questions about proactive work to get rent payments by direct payment from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Mr Christie indicated this had been explored but had still to be perfected by the DWP.

Councillor McAllister raised questions in relation to the contact centre, querying the maximum number of staff on duty at any one time, the minimum number of staff on duty at any one time and how often the second instance occurred. Mr Vestri indicated he would arrange for this information to be provided. Responding to delayed discharges target queries, Mr Vestri stated these were set by the Scottish Government; local authorities had no power to alter these targets.

Councillor McAllister opened the debate, commenting on the significant impact of Universal Credit and highlighting the increasing reliance on food banks and levels of poverty amongst children in Scotland. This Council was an exemplar; officers were doing an excellent job.

Councillor Gillies also commended the work carried out by these staff members.

Councillor MacKenzie also expressed his appreciation to the Finance Team; their responses to questions had been enlightening and helped Members gain a better understanding of the situation. The Council had a responsibility to collect rent but also a responsibility for the welfare of tenants. He also commented on the average number of days taken for re-housing, remarking that the Council's policy on council house transfers may need reviewed. With regard to delayed discharges he felt there were serious concerns to be addressed.

Decision

The Committee agreed to use the information provided in the report to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance was in need of improvement or further investigation.

3. EAST LoTHIAN AND MIDLoTHIAN PUBLIC PROTECTION ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

A report was submitted by the Chief Social Work Officer introducing the East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) Annual Report 2015/16.

Fiona Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer, presented the report informing Members that this was the second annual report of the EMPPC. It provided a broad summation of the work carried out in 2015/16 and commented on the main themes arising in each of the areas of Public Protection over this period; Adult Protection, Child Protection, Violence Against Women and Girls, Offender Management Group and also Training. The EMPPC had 3 sub-groups: the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group, the Learning and Practice Development Sub-group and the Offender Management Committee. She gave a summary of work carried out by these sub-groups. Ms Duncan then provided Members with details of work undertaken in the areas of Adult and Child Protection.

Councillor MacKenzie queried the origin of referrals other than those from Police Scotland. Anne Thompson, Public Protection Team Manager, advised that many adult referrals came from the 3rd Sector. Councillor MacKenzie expressed concern at the low number of referrals from GPs, querying the assistance provided. Ms Thompson stated that NHS Lothian produced very clear guidance for GPs regarding adult protection issue referrals. Regarding questions about retaining documents securely for the national inquiry, Ms Saunders stated that the Council's Document Retention Schedule applied to all the social work client groups. She added, in respect of the inquiry, that the Council had a duty to work with partner agencies and could be approached to provide specific information.

Responding to Councillor McLeod's question about the White Ribbon Campaign, Ms Thompson advised that nationally this campaign still existed but locally it had not been possible to provide support. In relation to accommodating sex offenders, Councillor McLeod asked who made this decision. Ms Duncan advised that this was a multi-agency decision, involving Criminal Justice, Police, Housing and Health services. Regarding queries about instances of violence against men, Ms Thompson stated there had been 3 cases; she added that Domestic Abuse Officers provided support and contact details for Abuse Men in Scotland, based in Edinburgh.

Councillor Williamson asked if local Members were informed if a high risk offender was to be placed in their ward; Ms Duncan confirmed this was done. Responding to questions about Inter-agency Referral Discussions, Ms Saunders stated that Child Protection protocols in East Lothian were slightly different to those in Midlothian so similar comparisons could not be made. She added that in 2012/13 a new way of working, Signs of Safety, had been introduced; this was a very engaged process regarding risks and safeguards and involved working with a family in relation to early intervention. This had contributed significantly to improvements. Responding to queries about training statistics, Ms Thompson stated this

was very high on the agenda and training and development took place across the whole public protection arena.

In response to Councillor Gillies, Ms Saunders replied that work in relation to Child Protection had not been specifically impacted by the closure of Haddington Sheriff Court.

Ms Thompson, in reply to a question from Councillor McAllister about Violence Against Women and Girls, confirmed that many cases were linked to alcohol, but stated that several other factors, including substance misuse, were also contributors.

Councillor McAllister stated this was a very good report and praised the work carried out by all agencies.

Councillor Gilles also expressed appreciation for all the work carried out by officers across the various agencies.

Councillor MacKenzie echoed the importance of this report. He reiterated his earlier comments about some of the agencies and his concerns about the low number of referrals.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee Annual Report for 2015/16.

4. COMMUNITY PAYBACK ORDERS

A report was submitted by the Chief Social Work Officer providing information about Community Payback Orders (CPO) in East Lothian. The CPO Annual Report 2015/16 was a statutory requirement requested annually by the Scottish Government.

Ms Duncan presented the report. The CPO Annual Report highlighted the variety of work undertaken by offenders which included all the requirements that could be made, although the majority of CPOs had either supervision or unpaid work requirements added. It was about promoting a community sentence rather than a custodial one and was of benefit to the offender and the community. Regarding CPO completion rates, East Lothian had an 86% success rate, which was above the national average. The majority of people on CPOs were male, and of an older cohort, aged 30 plus; the number of young offenders had reduced dramatically. She advised that East Lothian had quite a high number of people on CPOs who were in employment, 36%, which was quite unusual. Regarding the nature of offences, drugs and alcohol were significant contributors; road traffic offences were also significant.

Responding to a question from Councillor Goodfellow, Ms Duncan advised that a CPO could be made in any court but would be supervised in the area where the offender lived.

Councillor Williamson asked several questions about the unpaid work element. Ms Duncan advised that the team comprised 3 full time members of staff. Regarding reporting points for offenders, this varied depending on the nature of the work being carried out. In relation to individual placements and the level of information provided, she advised that the contact would be made aware that the person was on a CPO but no information was given about the particular nature of the offence.

In response to questions from Councillor MacKenzie, Ms Duncan advised that warning systems were in place for offenders who missed appointments or displayed behavioural issues. There was a pastoral element; everyone involved, CPO Team Leaders/Supervisors, was trained and made aware of their responsibilities.

Several Members welcomed this excellent and informative report, particularly welcoming the client feedback detailed in the report.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Community Payback Orders Annual Report for 2015/16.

5. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE 2016/17

An updated Annual Work Programme detailed the reports scheduled for the Committee for session 2016/17.

Additional reports requested:

- Homelessness update (*specific meeting tbc*)

Signed

Councillor Peter MacKenzie
Depute Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee